



The Maternal Ceiling

**Navigating the Barriers
to Career Advancement of Working Moms**

mandy schuchman

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**Background &
Laws**

The Research

The Problems

**Education &
Communication**

Background & Laws



The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978

Amendment to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit sex discrimination on the basis of pregnancy.

The law prohibits discrimination "because of sex" or "on the basis of sex" include, but are not limited to, because of or on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions; and women affected by pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions shall be treated the same for all employment-related purposes, including receipt of benefits under fringe benefit programs, as other persons not so affected but similar in their ability or inability to work, and nothing in section 703(h) of this title shall be interpreted to permit otherwise."

(U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1978).

The majority of U.S. states follow the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

“ FMLA guarantees certain employees up to 12 workweeks of unpaid leave each year with no threat of job loss. It also requires that employers covered by the law maintain the health benefits for eligible workers just as if they were working.”

FMLA Coverage

Public employees



Private employees

50 or more people
50% of American Workers

Who is left behind?



The other 50% are at risk
for no coverage

freelancers, contract
workers, entrepreneurs,
labor workers, small
business employees

women with children

Pumping at Work

There are 22 states in which employers must guarantee private non-bathroom space to pump breast milk, and “aren’t allowed to refuse to accommodate women with pregnancy-related conditions”



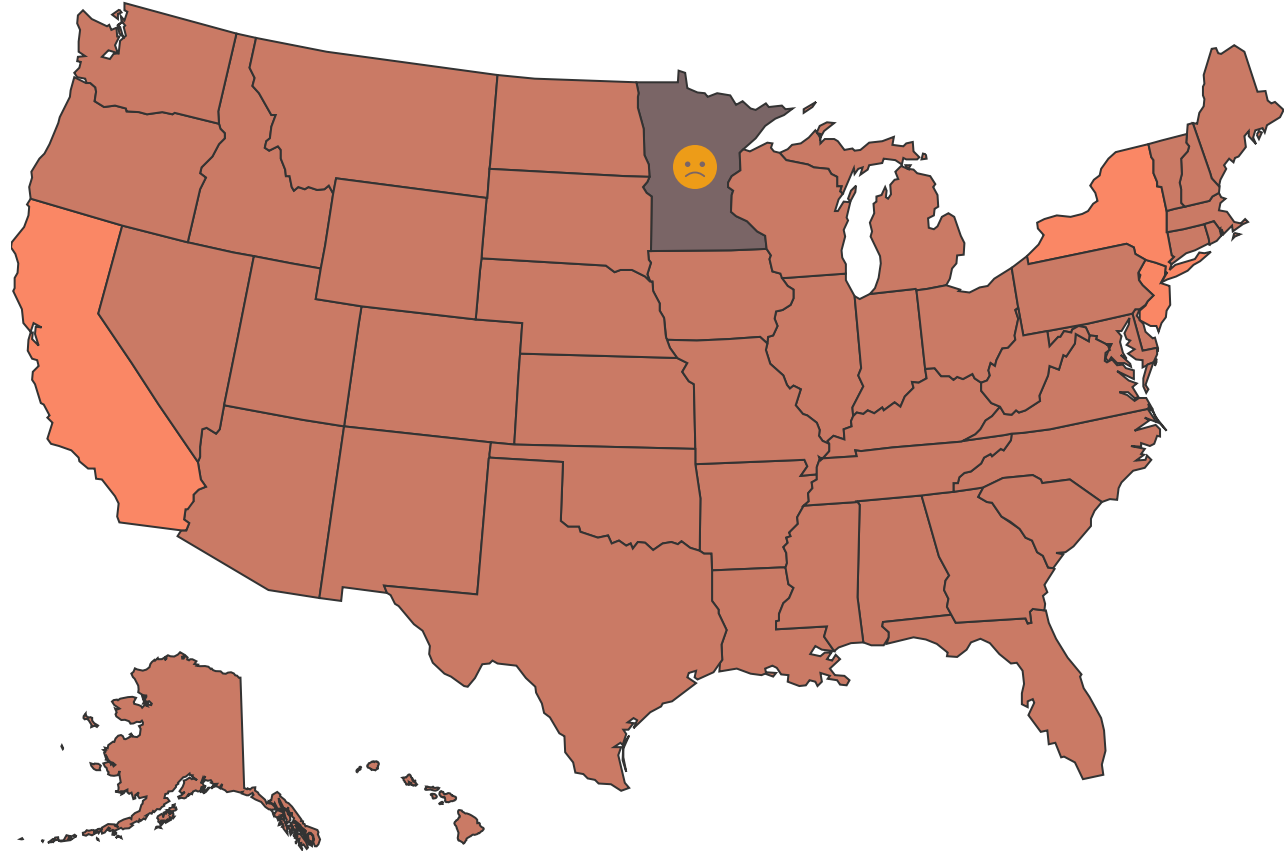
However, employers can get an exemption if following the law would “unduly disrupt” their business

Paid Maternity Leave in the United States

There are only four states that require some sort of paid maternity leave

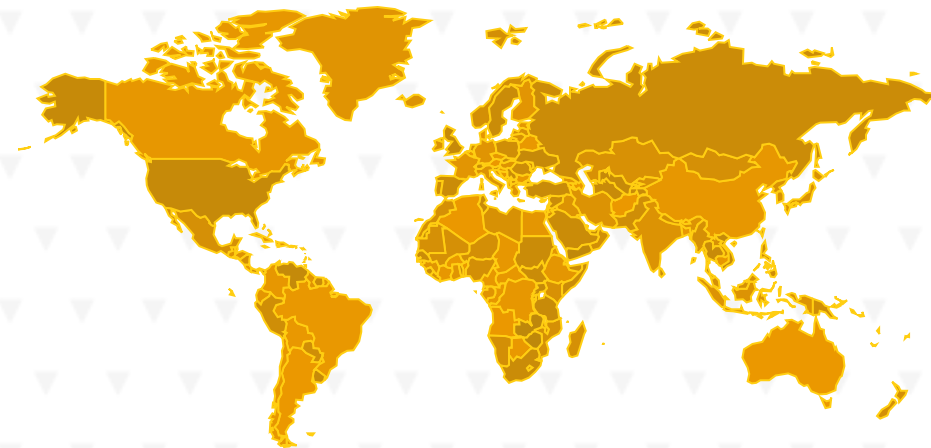
California, New Jersey, Rhode Island, New York

Fourteen percent of U.S. civilian workers have access to paid family leave.



Everywhere else...

According to the United Nations' International Labour Organization, there are only two countries in the world that don't have some form of legally protected, partially paid time off for working women who've just had a baby: Papua New Guinea and the U.S



“We have these policies set up from the Mad Men era when dads worked and moms stayed at home. But that doesn’t reflect the American workforce anymore.”

**Discrimination can be super hard to
pinpoint**

**Laws don't cover the nuances that have
consequences**

The Research

I conducted six interviews for this project with women who range in age, are diverse in ethnic background and education qualifications, and all work in different industries.

all have at least one college degree

middle or upper middle class

phone interviews

15 questions open ended questions

interviews about 25 minutes each

The Problems



Gender discrimination as mothers is the focus of this project, with a specific attention paid to the problems that create barriers for the advancement of working mothers.



SOCIETAL PERCEPTION

LACK OF
ACCOMODATION AND
NORMALIZATION OF
VISIBLE PARENTING

THE CONSEQUENCES
OF MISSING OUT

Societal Perception

Women are expected to be ever omnipresent and praised for their ability to “handle both”, yet, at the same time, if a mother spends too much time in either space, judgment occurs. Society has always struggled with the plurality that is a working mother and tends to view working mothers as somehow having less commitment to their job because they also want a family and vice versa, women are believed to have less commitment to family because they desire a career and have ambitions outside of the home.

A working mother is viewed through a highly capitalistic lense.

Mothers are perceived as having less commitment to their job, less interest, less competent as before, seen as less dependable as before they conceived or women without children

A cultural shift is necessary in how we judge a committed, competent employee.

Accommodation and Visible Parenting

- 47% of US Workforce are women
- 70% of mothers with children under 18 participate in the labor force
- 75% percent employed full-time.
- 40% of households, mothers are the primary or sole earners with children under 18 today, compared with 11% in 1960
- 49% of mothers reported workplace discrimination during pregnancy, parental leave, or on return to work



Issues

Breastfeeding accommodation

Language accommodation

Normalizing visible parenting for moms

Missing Out & the Double Standard

Invisible bias on working moms

There is a clear double standard that has real consequences on a woman's advancement at work.

As men are not traditionally considered or required to be the primary caretakers of children, they are able to compartmentalize their life separate from work.

Working mom's career motivations during all stages are questioned, something that never happens to men.

Working mothers are made to feel like an inconvenience to their organizations. A woman choosing to get pregnant while being employed or if she already has children and desires more responsibility such as through promotion, are seen as having no commitment to their job because sooner or later, their status as a mother will impact their productivity and presence.

“Mother’s career paths are rarely linear; rather, they are dotted with periods of maternity leave, part-time employment, and most often, the challenges of teaming wage-work with at-home caring responsibilities, outside of the working day. Time on the job begets experience, and experience precipitates opportunities for promotion”

Education is key, and communication can act as the vehicle for helping women identify and act

This project will help women understand how to spot discrimination when it happens to them, and more importantly, will assist women in knowing they are not alone, that action against discrimination is realistic, and that support is available. Through compiled primary interview insights, which have helped inform this project, my key strategic takeaway is a digital brochure aimed to educate working mothers on the warning signs of discrimination as well as available action they can take and where they can find and utilize support from community and non-profit law organizations.

Navigating Workplace Discrimination as a Mother



Workplace discrimination can be difficult to spot, but knowing the signs can make it easier to identify.

Yes, it's 2019, and yes, somehow this stuff still happens.

In 1978, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act was amended to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit sex discrimination on the basis of pregnancy.

These laws protect working mom's by labeling them as a "protected class" but despite this being illegal, workplace discrimination on the basis of being a mama still happens on the regular. (The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2019).

Women of color, immigrants, and those from lower-socioeconomic backgrounds are statistically at higher risk for discrimination and consistently make less money than their white counterparts. It's important to view this issue through an intersectional lens and understand workplace discrimination affects all women differently and many, more drastically (Center For American Progress, 2019).

If you are planning to have a baby, and still work, or have kids currently and hustle at the office, the unfortunate truth is, you are at risk for discrimination.

The following advice was curated from **six interviews** from June 2019 from working mom's who want to help you know what to watch out for and how to protect yourself should you experience workplace discrimination.

**NOT A MOM?
NOT A PROBLEM.
This isn't just a
mommy issue.
Representation from
all sides matters.**

You can still help. Be present and start the important progressive conversations!

Dads

- Be HONEST about your family commitments to normalize family accommodation in the workplace for everyone with home commitments.
- Take advantage of your opportunity for paternity leave...and take it all!

Start where you want to end up

- "Know the laws and know your rights; familiarize yourself with labor and health laws of your state. Understand the family leave, and maternity policies of your organization; ask HR for detailed information what applies to you and how these laws affect you and your job."
- "Advocate for yourself when negotiating for salary and benefits."
- "Develop or join a support group; network with other like-minded working moms for advice and support."
- Non-profit **"9to5"** works to promote equity for all women regardless of status, race, socioeconomic background. #PowerInNumbers
- "Develop skills for "managing up"; learn to confidently coach your boss in ways to be an advocate."

"Do your research; look at the profile of the employer online and know what you are getting into before you step foot into the interview."

If you feel your job is threatened

"Don't be afraid to get a f*cking lawyer to assist you in navigating this difficult and often daunting territory; don't sign any legally binding documents without a lawyers advice (ex: non-disclosure agreement)."

- "Document everything; keep your own records of the indiscretions and save them outside of your work email server."
- "Go to HR and file a complaint. Remember, while it can be scary, this is bigger than yourself and you are helping other women be seen."
- "Feel confident in your right to offer suggestions for improvement within your workplace. You deserve a place to pump other than the bathroom."

Know when to get out

- "If your current employer doesn't support your values as a mother it may be time to find a new gig."
- "Trust your gut; no job is worth being in a bad, unsupportive environment. Your mental health and happiness matters."
- "Know the warning signs and understand your rights: Check out this awesome blog written by a badass lawyer mom: **"The Mom At Law"**"

"As women, we are doers and fixers. And at the end of the day, it is not your job to fix the culture of a company, it's your job to do your job well and show up."

Audiences & Distribution

- 1) Working moms + women who work and want kids
- 2) Interested Others

- Distributed online to non-profit organizations and law offices

- Could be formatted for print

Evaluation

- Analytics
 - Clicks & Downloads
 - Click -Thrus
 - Time Spent on Page
- Follow Up Interviews